

XIV. Pilotage

Pilotage is of primary import to Bay shipping because of complex local conditions consisting of narrow navigation channels, many bridges, swift tides and currents, variable weather patterns, and large numbers of ships and small vessels. For more than one-hundred-fifty years, the State has regulated pilotage over the Golden Gate bar through the State Board of Pilot Commissioners, which was created in 1850.

San Francisco Bar Pilots. This category of pilots is also referred to as Bar Pilots. A state license is required for a Bar Pilot to handle vessels entering the Bay and operating inside the Bay. A federal pilot's license is also required. The State Board of Pilot Commissioners regulates the number, licensing, training and disciplining of Bar Pilots for the Bays of San Francisco, San Pablo and Suisun.

Federal Pilots. Federal pilots are licensed by the U.S. Coast Guard to handle U.S. flag vessels under enrollment. State licenses for these pilots are not required.

Inland Pilots. An inland pilot is required to have both a state license and a federal license to pilot vessels solely inside of the Golden Gate. The State Board of Pilot Commissioners regulates inland pilots.

Pilotage for the Ports of Stockton and Sacramento. The Ports of Stockton and Sacramento have separate pilotage authority from the Board of Pilot Commissioners. In practice, these ports issue commissions to certain pilots licensed by the state.

Docking Pilots. Section 1179 of the Harbors and Navigation Code allows shipping companies who expressed their intent to the Board of Pilot Commissioners before July 1, 1983, to have their own employees used as pilots in lieu of Bar Pilots. In the Bay, a grandfathering clause allows one shipping company to use its own employee(s) who are not subject to State Board of Pilot Commission regulations as pilots for docking. These employees are federally licensed.

Vessel Movements. The decision-making process by the Master and the Pilot to move a vessel should consider all relevant factors, including, but not limited to:

- The characteristics of the vessel, such as maneuverability, size and draft;
- The capabilities of the vessel's navigation equipment;
- Tide, current and wind conditions on the intended route;
- Time of the day in relation to whether the fog may be in a cycle of "burning off" or lifting;

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- Possible hazards along the route, such as bridges, and amount and nature of vessel traffic; and
- Visibility conditions at the dock, en route and at the destination, and assessment of whether these conditions are changing.

Harbors and Navigation Code Preventing Unlicensed Person from Performing Pilotage. State legislation requires the use of pilots on San Francisco Bay and provides penalties to prevent unlicensed persons from performing pilotage. The penalty for acting as a pilot while not holding a pilot license was increased to a maximum of \$25,000 (Harbors and Navigation Code Section 1126).